

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-14 (cancelled)

Claim 15 (previously amended) A vehicle steering linkage member comprising:

a socket; and

3 a stud having a ball end portion received in said socket and supported for pivotal movement relative to said socket, said stud having a longitudinal axis, said stud having a shank portion projecting from said socket and centered on said axis;

said shank portion of said ball stud including a predetermined weakened portion, said predetermined weakened portion having a cross-sectional configuration that is not centered on said axis.

Claim 16 (previously amended) A linkage member as set forth in claim 15 wherein said shank portion of said ball stud has a circular cross-sectional configuration centered on said axis and said predetermined weakened portion has a circular cross-sectional configuration that is eccentric to said axis.

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Claim 17 (previously amended) A linkage member as set forth in claim 15 wherein said predetermined weakened portion buckles under a predetermined amount of force.

Claims 18-21 (cancelled)

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Claim 22 (new) A linkage member comprising:

a shank extending axially along a first axis, said shank having a first portion with a first outer surface that extends entirely around a circumference of said shank and is centered on said first axis;

said shank including a narrowed second portion at a predetermined location along said first axis, said narrowed second portion having a cross-sectional area less than a cross-sectional area of said first portion, said shank adapted to buckle at said narrowed second portion under a predetermined axial load,

said narrowed second portion of said shank including a second outer surface that extends entirely around said circumference of said shank and is located entirely within a projection of said cross-sectional area of said first portion, said narrowed second portion being centered on a second axis that is offset relative to said first axis.

Claim 23 (new) The linkage member of claim 22 wherein said first and second outer surfaces are cylindrical, said entire second outer surface being located radially inwardly, relative to said first axis, of said first outer surface.

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Claim 24 (new) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said narrowed second portion of said shank includes first and second opposite ends, a first annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said first end of said narrowed second portion and a second annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said second end of said narrowed second portion, said first and second annular tapered surfaces being asymmetric about said first axis.

Claim 25 (new) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said shank has a first circular cross-section and said narrowed portion has a second circular cross-section that is non-concentric with said first circular cross-section.

Claim 26 (new) The linkage member of claim 22 wherein said second axis extends parallel to said first axis.

Claim 27 (new) The linkage member of claim 26 said narrowed second portion of said shank extends straight along said second axis and parallel to said first axis.

Claim 28 (new) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said first and second axes are linear and are parallel to each other.

Claim 29 (new) A linkage member comprising:

By a shank having opposite ends and extending axially along a first linear axis, said shank having a first portion with a first cylindrical outer surface that is centered on said first linear axis;

said shank including a narrowed second portion at a predetermined location intermediate said ends of said shank along said first linear axis, said narrowed second portion having a cross-sectional area less than a cross-sectional area of said first portion, said shank adapted to buckle at said narrowed second portion under a predetermined axial load,

said narrowed second portion of said shank including a second cylindrical outer surface that is centered on a second linear axis that is offset relative to said first linear axis and extends parallel to said first linear axis.

Claim 30 (new) The linkage member of claim 29 wherein said entire second cylindrical outer surface is located radially inwardly, relative to said first cylindrical linear axis, of said first outer surface.

Claim 31 (new) The linkage member of claim 30 wherein said narrowed second portion of said shank includes first and second opposite ends, a first annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said first end of said narrowed second portion and a second annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said second end of

said narrowed second portion, said first and second annular tapered surfaces being asymmetric about said first linear axis.

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Claim 32 (new) The linkage member of claim 30 wherein said shank has a first circular cross-section and said narrowed portion has a second circular cross-section that is non-concentric with said first circular cross-section.

Claim 33 (new) The linkage member of claim 29 wherein said narrowed second portion of said shank extends straight along said second linear axis and parallel to said first linear axis.

Claim 34 (new) A linkage member comprising:

a shank having first and second portions, said first portion having opposite first and second ends and extending axially along a first axis, said first portion having a first cross-sectional area that is centered on said first axis, said first cross-sectional area having a first cross-sectional shape;

said second portion of said shank being located intermediate said first and second ends of said first portion, said shank adapted to buckle at said second portion under a predetermined axial load, said second portion of said shank having a second cross-sectional area that is smaller than said first cross-sectional area, said second cross-sectional area being centered on a second axis that is offset relative to

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said first axis, said second cross-sectional area also having said first cross-sectional shape;

first and second transition portions connecting said second portion of said shank to said first and second ends of said first portion, respectively, each of said first and second transition portions having an outer surface that extends axially, when measured along said first axis, over a first distance on a first side of said first axis and over a second distance, different from said first distance, on a second side of said first axis, opposite said first side.

Claim 35 (new) The linkage member of claim 34 wherein said first and second portions of said shank are cylindrical and said first cross-sectional shape is circular.

Claim 36 (new) The linkage member of claim 34 wherein said first and second axes are linear and are parallel to each other.

Claim 37 (new) The linkage member of claim 34 wherein said outer surface of each of said first and second transition portions tapers radially inwardly, relative to said first axis, from said first portion of said shank to said second portion of said shank.